

Healthy Eating

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has identified 34 census tracts in Fulton County as food deserts. Approximately 150,000 persons live in these census tracks. By working with community partners, including schools and early care centers in areas where data indicate there are high rates of childhood obesity, the PICH Program aims to help improve access to healthy nutrition options for all persons in the identified high-risk areas.

According to Achieving a State of Healthy Weight: 2013 Supplement, Georgia ranks 29th among all 50 states in how well its regulations governing Early Care and Education (ECE) address healthy weight practices. Only 18% (that is, only 17) of Georgia's provisions governing infant feeding and nutrition practices in ECE settings fully met the evidence-based standards for nutrition (National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Education, 2014). Of the ECE providers surveyed in Fulton County, 30% do not have written policies in place that are aligned to evidence-based promoting healthy nutrition practices.

The PICH Program is working with its Healthy Eating Program partners to:

- increase the number of people with improved access to environments with healthy food and beverage options*
- increase the number of outside-of-school care providers with improved policies and procedures for providing healthy food and beverages to their clients*
- increase the number of corner stores in designated food deserts participating in a 'healthy corner store initiative'*
- increase the number of government agencies with healthy vending policies*
- increase the number of farmer's markets with EBT programs for purchasing fruits and vegetables*
- increase the number of hospitals with healthy food procurement policies*
- increase the number of faith-based organizations with policies that support healthy foods and beverages*

The PICH Program is developing a Let's Move: Early Care and Education Policy initiative that will promote the adoption of wellness policies among ECE providers that support healthy nutrition and infant feeding practices and will provide technical assistance to ECE providers to facilitate the implementation of these policies. The PICH Program will work with Georgia Department of Early Care and Adult Learning (DECAL), Health Promotion Action Committee (HPAC), community partners, school administrations, staff, parents, and students at the 50 selected Child Care Learning Centers within Fulton County to increase the number of ECE providers that incorporate the accepted practices into their operations:

- Physical Activity: Provide 1-2 hours of physical activity throughout the day, including outside play when possible.*
- Screen Time: Children under the age of 2 have no screen time. For 2 and up, work to limit to 30 minutes per week during child care. Aim for no more than 1-2 hours/day of quality screen time at home.*
- Nutrition: Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal. Eat meals family-style whenever possible. Avoid serving fried foods.*
- Beverage Consumption: Provide water during meals and all day. Avoid sugary drinks. Two and up, serve low- or non-fat milk and 4-6 ounces max of 100% juice a day.*
- Breast Feeding: Provide breast milk to infants of mothers who wish to breastfeed. Welcome mothers to nurse mid-day and support parents' decisions with infant feeding.*

This work will occur in tandem with the physical activity efforts, facilitating an integrated approach for assessing, developing, and implementing nutrition and physical activity policies as part of an overarching PICH Program wellness policy initiative.